

Judge Anaconda By Fluoride Controls

Future plans of the Anaconda Company in Montana in part should be judged on how well the corporation handles the problem of fluorides that are killing trees in and near Columbia Falls.

The Columbia Falls plant started operations in 1955, expanded in 1964-65 and again in 1967-68. The two potlines of 1967-68 resulted in job increase from 609 in 1966 to 985 at present.

There are Flathead citizens who recall 2,000 men out of work 20 years ago. Especially in the current recession period, having a good payroll is a boon to Columbia Falls, the Flathead and Montana.

Meanwhile in Helena, Monday saw conservationists block Anaconda efforts to obtain easements on 680 acres of state school lands in Heddleston District near Lincoln between Missoula and Great Falls.

Proposed is a copper-molybdenum open pit mine and mill that would employ 500.

Governor Forrest H. Anderson said he favored "very restrictive" easements on 680 acres of state school lands for the proposed mining venture. The state would receive \$118,918.

The governor stated: "We have to have metals in the United States and this is essentially mining country." He continued on the need to broaden Montana's tax base and provide more employment.

On the otherhand conservationists have a more detached view on payrolls and budgets, and wanted a "full

disclosure of proposed pollution controls" before any easement is granted.

Of 327 Lincoln citizens polled, 78 per cent said they thought the company should present its plan for environmental protection before easement on state lands is granted.

Montana actually is embarking on more air pollution controls than many states. The Montana Board of Health is much involved at present in a head-on collision with metal and petroleum refineries and coal burning plants in an effort to control sulfur fumes which result in sulfuric acid on the land, buildings and people, namely in Anaconda, Billings, Great Falls and East Helena. There is also the May 23 ban on sawmill emissions. It's quite a handful.

Here in the Flathead, Anaconda Aluminum Co. has not yet come up with a proposal as to how fluorides will be reduced so as to reduce tree deaths, which became noticeable in Columbia Falls following the 1967-68 expansion. Controls will be expensive.

The company appears correct in assuming that the Flathead is more interested in payrolls than in survival of trees in and near Columbia Falls. The tree blight doesn't affect Kalispell or Whitefish, but payrolls do. Active protest is in the minority.

On the otherhand, situation where vegetation in Glacier National Park is damaged should involve such organizations as the influential Sierra Club. Fluorides in Glacier National Park have potential of a national issue. Control has to come.